

D

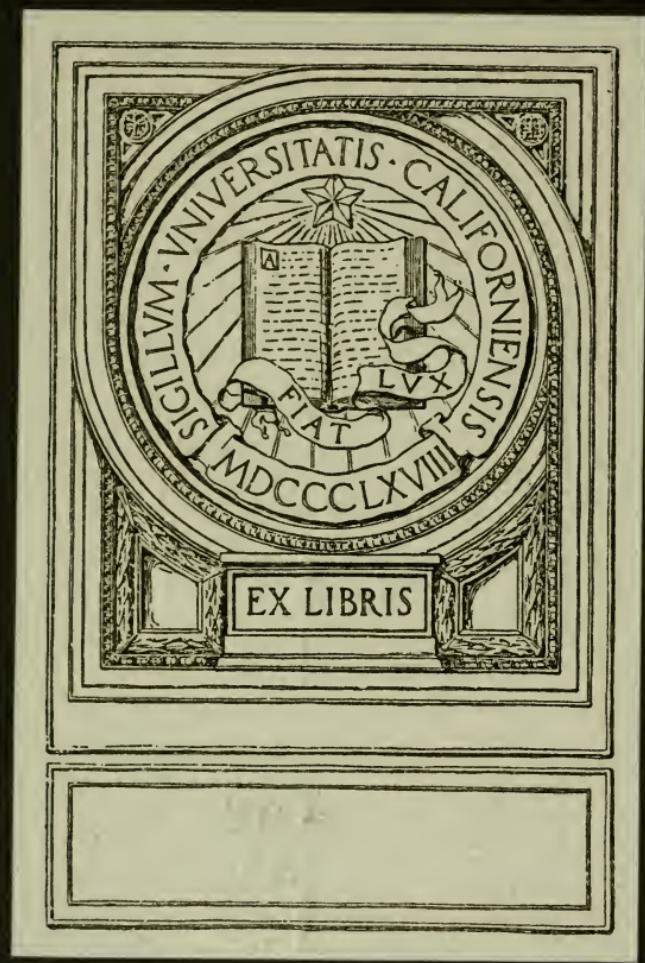
525

[5

UC-NRLF



B 4 079 777



Caylond Bros.
Makers
Syracuse, N.Y.
PAT. JAN. 21, 1908

ART, MORALS, AND THE WAR

A LECTURE
DELIVERED
IN THE ASHMOLEAN MUSEUM, OXFORD
ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 1914

BY
SELWYN IMAGE, M.A.
NEW COLLEGE
SLADE PROFESSOR OF FINE ART

Price Sixpence net

HUMPHREY MILFORD
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
LONDON EDINBURGH GLASGOW NEW YORK
TORONTO MELBOURNE BOMBAY

1914

ART, MORALS, AND THE WAR

A LECTURE
DELIVERED
IN THE ASHMOLEAN MUSEUM, OXFORD
ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 1914

BY
SELWYN IMAGE, M.A.
NEW COLLEGE
SLADE PROFESSOR OF FINE ART

HUMPHREY MILFORD
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
LONDON EDINBURGH GLASGOW NEW YORK
TORONTO MELBOURNE BOMBAY

1914

1596
15

OXFORD: HORACE HART M.A.
PRINTER TO THE UNIVERSITY

THE VIVIEN
ARMSTRONG

ART, MORALS, AND THE WAR

As some of you may possibly remember, my last lecture at the close of Summer Term was delivered amid a tempest of thunder, lightning, and hail. We meet to-day for the first lecture of this Term with the whole world about us in a tempest indeed—a tempest under which, in the prophetic words, ‘the foundations of the earth do shake’, and are being, as it were visibly, ‘discovered’.

You will not therefore be surprised, I am sure, nor think it needs much apology on my part, if this afternoon my thoughts run rather upon the War, and, as it seems to me, the final, moral, spiritual significance of it, than directly upon some aspect of Art. With my next lecture we shall once again settle down quietly to our particular business. On November the 26th I hope to speak to you about that great man and wholly unique artist Jean François Millet—a lecture which I have more than once promised you, and which will fit in very well as a conclusion to the line of thought I was trying throughout the whole of last year to lay before you in my course from November to June, beginning with Leonardo and ending with William Blake. On December the 3rd our subject will be the Art of Lettering in Decoration. If that title sounds to you at first hearing to imply something uninterestingly specialized and not of general importance, I shall be in hopes of convincing you to the contrary. That of course waits to be seen. But at any rate—if it is any consolation—both for the Millet afternoon, and the afternoon on this Art of Lettering, I can promise you some pleasing illustrations. For to-day I have none.

I do not for a moment think, however, that I am travelling outside my proper province here in venturing this afternoon to beg you to let me lay before you briefly a few reflections upon the subject which is uppermost in all our minds—the subject from whose imperious obsession there is at the moment no escape for any of us, be our special work and duties in the world what they may.

And further than this. Within the last few weeks there has appeared in the papers a Manifesto in respect of the war issued as under a sense of public obligation, a Manifesto bearing the signatures of a large number of the professors and teachers in our Universities and other seats of education. I am sorry that I was unaware that any such Manifesto was in course of being drawn up—the ignorance was doubtless due to my own fault, still I am only the more sorry on that account—for had I known of any such thing being in the air, I certainly should have asked the privilege of being allowed to append my name. I will be quite frank with you. It would go very much to my heart if any suspicion should arise that the occupant of the Chair of Fine Art in this ancient and great University, however himself unworthy and personally insignificant, had withheld his name from so important a pronouncement, or had thought the thing of so little moment as to be careless whether he signed it or not. Let me put it to you. I am sure you are well aware that if there is any one thing I have tried to insist upon more than another during the tenure of my professorship it is this—that Art is not an interest for the world merely by the way, a side issue, a pleasant entertainment for the speculation of the curious, a refined pastime for the elect and leisured. I have insisted upon this point not only in these public lectures—in *them* sometimes I fear insisted almost *ad nauseam*—but in whatever counsel I have had the privileged opportunity of giving to students privately. May I refer here in passing specially to that little body of

students in the University who earlier in the year formed themselves into a club for artistic gatherings, doing me the honour of making me an Honorary Member of their club, and asking me to give it its opening address? Since I have been in Oxford nothing has encouraged me more than that; nothing has held out to me so much a prospect of being at last possibly of some practical service here, as the establishment by the undergraduates themselves of the Georgian Club. But to-day the work of this, as the work of many like societies, must for a while, I fear, be much or altogether in abeyance. One regrets it—one regrets it bitterly—but it cannot be helped. The call of our country on the young to leave other matters, however absorbing, and do their plain, first duty by her has been peremptory. And assuredly no artist, or teacher of art, who knows truly what art means, but rejoices that so instinctively, so promptly, in such numbers, have they answered to that call, and are answering. Art will grudge none of us answering to it each in his way. She knows that by and by she will suffer no loss through our enforced desertion of her: nay, that it will turn altogether vitally to her gain. Those who come back anon to renew or to enter upon her service will have had experience, one fancies, by which many a wanton mood will be purged out of them, many an idle conceit stripped off, many a misguiding mist of mental or moral obliquity dispelled.

So much, then, I hope will serve by way of any preface or apology, if such be necessary, in respect of what I have in mind to say to you this afternoon. Nor indeed, though in the greater part of what I say there is certainly little or nothing bearing upon Art directly, am I being impudent enough to beg your attention to reflections really foreign to its sane and wider consideration. At any rate, believe me, so it seems to my thinking, and I ask you to bear with me. I am giving you just and all that at the moment it is in me to give at the start of this new year's course of lectures—some expression, how-

ever imperfect, of what I am far from vainly sure the artistic profession I have the honour to represent in this University would wish Oxford to understand was its feeling at this crisis in our history.

For indeed throughout these three and a half months past, what thoughts have any of us had but of one thing: nay, but of that one thing, what thoughts have any of us still? Those few closing days of July, those four strained opening days of August; and then, at midnight of that fateful Wednesday, the 5th, we knew at last the worst—War was upon us! The *worst*, one says. Yes, in a sense. But by and by I don't think we shall say the worst. God forbid that I should be talking in any light-hearted fashion. War came upon us, came upon us as a bolt out of the blue—that terrible thing, War. And—what a war!

In extent, in the number of those engaged in it, in the novel and deadly character of the engines employed in it, in the slaughter and devastation necessarily resulting from it, a war of unexampled horror. Yet it is not of these things that I am at the moment thinking. One can hardly take up a paper without one's eye being caught perpetually by such head-lines as 'The Vastest War ever waged', 'The Longest Battle ever known on Earth', 'Three Million Men over a line 200 miles in length at deadly grip', 'Unprecedented Slaughter, out-Heroding Barbaric Ruthlessness', and the like. Things perfectly true, things perfectly natural and proper to insist on, things replete with import and suggestion which have to be faced and appreciated, things which at the moment in the crashing hurly-burly of the struggle loom largest.

Yet, by and by, when in God's good time the world is come once more sanely at peace, ah! then, I venture to suggest to you, they will not so loom. It is not by physical scale—the scale of its armies, the scale of the territories involved in it, the scale even of its devastation and horrors, that in days ahead this war will be seen

most significantly to be characterized. Scale is an amazingly impressive thing, I allow you ; it grips and it dazes us, it appears at the moment as that which is of uttermost consequence. What is there, then, about this war so uniquely gigantic beyond all question, what is there about it which some time will eclipse its giganticalness ? That is what I am asking you to fix your mind upon this afternoon. I know it requires some effort to fix one's mind upon it. As I have just said, you and I are in the hurly-burly of the struggle. We are in a fever to know what is happening, how things are going with us and our allies. We want news, news. There come news of a success, and we are elated. There come news of a rebuff, and we are dispirited. All of us are. It is but nature, it is inevitable. There is no such thing possible as quite unconcernedly keeping our heads. The ebb and flow of affairs strain us. But the thing is—what does this struggle, this unprecedentedly gigantic struggle, mean ? What are we, and as one may say the whole civilized world, what are we all at ?

Well, the answer is—and I almost think for the first time in the history of the British Empire could such an answer be given—the answer is that we are in the midst of a war, literally and simply, of Ideals, of quite fundamental Principles, bed-rock principles as the phrase goes, as to what Human Civilization means. Moreover, it is in respect of these a war to the finish, to the death. There must be no half-measures this time, no by and by yielding to natural feelings of compunction as if we had gone far enough, no inconclusive results and patched-up peace, whatever exhaustion be involved.

Let me put it to you as plainly as I can.

In a quite vital sense we are at war to preserve our own national independence. If Germany—I mean by Germany throughout the Dominant Military Caste in Germany—could really have her way in this war, if she could finally bring to pass that which she set out to bring to pass, which this many a day she has dreamed

of and strenuously prepared for, there would no more be any England as you and I know it and love it. I will do Germany the credit of saying that of this she has made no secret. It needs very slight acquaintance with the utterances of the Potsdam autocrats, their philosophers and professors, to see this clear as is the sun in the sky. We are fighting, then, to preserve our own national independence. But that we have done before now, notably a hundred years since, when Napoleon was straddling over Europe; and many another nation beside us has in its time done the like. It is most important, it is vital, that we should fight for our national independence as long as breath is in our bodies. But in the present war we are doing something more than this; and something even more vital than this. What is it?

Three and a half months ago there was no thought of war in us. We are not a bellicose people. More than that, we are not a people easily stirred into believing that others have an evil eye on us, long to have their knife into us. We may not be an effusive people; but we are good-natured, like to be friends, and are not prone to suspicion of our neighbours. I do not mean that we are immaculate, that we have not serious faults, that we may plume ourselves on possession of all the virtues, and pat one another on the back with illimitable self-satisfaction. But what I have just ventured to say about us British, that at least I do think we are fairly justified in saying.

But those fateful opening days of August last brought us a rude awakening. When Germany violated her solemnly pledged word to Belgium, and violated it contemptuously, cynically, all of us were for the moment stunned, could scarce credit our ears. But the next moment, in the twinkling of an eye, we had quietly made up our mind what we had to do. We had to fight Germany. Why had we to fight her? Because, but not only because, we were pledged to Belgium, and

it is our way to stand to our word. Because, but not only because, France and Russia were our friends, and it is our way to stand by friends as far as may be. Because, but not only because, the scales now beginning to fall from our sight, we had a shrewd forecast that Germany had her eye on us too for by and by—a forecast developing events have justified up to the hilt. For all these things Germany had to be fought ; but not for these alone. There was a higher and a sterner call upon us to fight than even these ; and we realized it. By a sort of miraculous intuition we realized it on the instant ; and, thank God, on the instant our minds were made up to answer it. Every stage and experience of this war since it began only more and more justify that intuition, show how sane and healthy it was. Nor is it only the events and revelations of the war that justify it, but also the more intimate study of the modern German mind and character upon which these events and revelations have thrown us. Mark you, I say advisedly the modern German mind and character—that modern mind and character debauched and disgraced by the inhuman and insolent Prussian mind and character, to which so strangely, thoroughly, and, as in the event it will prove disastrously to them, alas ! these Germans at large have unworthily submitted themselves.

Now, what is this Prussian mind and character—let us call it simply Prussianism ? Cover it up in what resounding phrases you like—envelop it in whatever deceptive mist of historical, philosophic, scientific research and argument, the essence of Prussianism, the naked thing itself, is this—an insatiate craving for material Dominance over your fellow-men, and an unrestrained acceptance of the doctrine that towards grasping this Dominance Might gives you Right. That, I say, is the naked ugly thing itself.

Well, once accept that end as your ideal in life, and that doctrine as a legitimate means towards attaining your ideal, and it needs no prophet to foresee into

what courses of behaviour you will be led. Sooner or later every seed bringeth forth fruit after its own kind. As surely as the apple-stock bears apples and the thistle-weed thistle-down, this absorption of man's soul on material Dominance, and his acceptance of the one law of Might, lead him naturally and inevitably, as opportunity or necessity present themselves, into unscrupulousness, terrorism, lying, cruelty, treachery, every dishonourable species of conceivable meanness. In the continuous history of Prussianism since in the seventeenth century the Hohenzollern dynasty first came prominently to a head we can read this writ plain. The origin and course of the present war only bring home through actual experience to us all what many of us have long known through the pages of history. I will remind you of but a single instance to the point. The base cynical violation of Germany's pledged word to Belgium in this war is exactly paralleled by the base cynical violation of Frederick the Great's pledged word to Maria Theresa in the middle of the eighteenth century, when he invaded Silesia. You remember that along with the other European rulers Frederick had solemnly bound himself by treaty to maintain the Pragmatic Sanction by virtue of which Silesia was secured to the Queen of Hungary. He professed to be the Queen's devoted friend and admirer. Yet, note you, without any declaration of war, actually while paying to Maria Theresa his fulsome compliments and cajoling her into supposing he was amongst her most steadfast friends, Frederick had already in secrecy brought a large body of his troops into Silesia and begun its annexation.

That was Frederick the Great, the hero and idol of the Hohenzollerns, of the military caste of Potsdam, of Prussianism. There in a single notorious instance you have a sample of Prussianism in its spirit and its behaviour. To-day we are witnesses of the foul thing grown to the full, intoxicating and spreading its fatal

growth over a whole people in so many ways admirable and great. One may recall Frederick's own words about himself uttered in a moment of frank self-expression over this very Silesian business. He had his qualms, it would appear, to start with. But then, he says—they are his own words—'Ambition, interest, the desire of making people talk about me, carried the day ; and I decided for war.' Well, there you have it in a nutshell. Nothing is sacred to Prussianism but its own selfish ambition. No treaties are sacred, no pledges to observe certain laws of warfare, no consideration of innocent peoples caught in war's onward progress, no consideration of responsibility to the world at large for the world's common treasures of history and art, no sense of how a gentle and fine nature acts when it finds itself under the compulsion of war. In a word—the thing is now clear as daylight—in its insensate and vulgar lust of power there is no Blackguardism to which Prussianism will not, in order to secure its purpose, allow itself to descend.

The marvel of it! the appalling lesson it is to all men at large! I know it is a hard saying, and I have no mind to be unduly hard. I have no mind to exaggerate. But am I exaggerating? I only wish to see things as they are, and on occasion it is well to call a spade a spade. Now, I put it to you: Is there any other word more literally true than this precise word *Blackguardism* of such conduct as Frederick the Great's to Maria Theresa, or of Bismarck's forged telegram in 1870, or of the Kaiser's violation of the Belgian treaty, or of the destruction of Louvain, or of the bombardment of Rheims Cathedral, or of the infamies to women and children throughout Belgium, or of the dropping of bombs over defenceless towns, or of the sowing of the open sea with mines, or during a time of peace of secretly preparing places as platforms for your siege guns in your neighbours' land whose hospitality and protection you are freely accepting, or of honeycombing during a time

of peace your neighbours' society with spies, instructed by you to grasp their neighbour with the hand of friendship and be profuse in their protestations of loyalty? For such things as these is there any better word than Blackguardism? And with such things as these the tale, alas! of Prussianism is replete.

And now, mark you, these and other such things as I have mentioned are the direct and applauded fruits of Prussianism, things from their earliest youth instilled into its subjects, not only as pardonable at a pinch, but as admirable; they are by no means mere unfortunate accidents and misapprehensions by the way. For again, listen a moment, not now to Frederick but to Bismarck, calmly enunciating his doctrine of war: 'Above all, you must inflict on the inhabitants of invaded towns', he says, 'the maximum of suffering that they may become sick of the struggle, and may bring pressure to bear on their Government to discontinue it. You must leave the people through whom you march only their eyes to weep with. In every case the principle which guided our Generals was that war must be made terrible to the civil population, so that it may sue for peace.' There is the Prussian theory and aim, not blurted out in a moment of passion, but deliberately and quietly set forth as permanent sound doctrine for its people. Grasp that. These things I have just mentioned are but examples of the accredited methods by which Prussianism seeks to make her civilization prevail, and by which she boasts that it is the decree of the Eternal that she shall succeed in making it prevail the world over. About this, since Bismarck's time, such established authorities as Treitschke and his pupil Bernhardi make no bones—one may at least put to their credit this much of honesty. But there has been a more subtle influence at work of recent years in Germany—one has felt it stealing over here as well—than Treitschke's or Bernhardi's. It is the half-rhapsodic, half-philosophic, half-scientific teaching of Friedrich Nietzsche that has poisoned the wells of

thought. Throughout his hectic career—one must remember in some palliation of him the poor man died in a lunatic asylum—Nietzsche virulently proclaimed himself as an Anti-Christ, the apostle of Unmorality, the scorner of any idea as to there being such a thing as an eternal distinction between Evil and Good. His inventions of the Super-man and The-Will-to-Power have passed into catchwords amongst his innumerable admirers ; and fed upon such diet as he dispensed to them and they greedily swallowed, his countrymen have grown to regard themselves as indeed super-men—super-men whose will-to-power over the entire nations of the earth nothing can finally stand against.

I am well aware that enamoured students and defenders of Nietzsche assure us that his teaching has been grievously misapprehended ; and that so far from Prussianism embodying his ideas, it would have been wholly abhorrent to him. To some extent this may be so. Nietzsche throughout was in spite of his genius of so unbalanced a mind, that it is questionable whether he himself often knew clearly what his ideas were, and still less whether he saw what results were involved in them. But apart from the consideration of Nietzsche's own character and responsibility this matters little. What does matter is that, whether rightly or wrongly, a vast number of his countrymen have sucked in poison from the man, and have translated his teaching into a specious philosophic and scientific justification for their own unregenerate arrogance, irreverence, and selfish brutality. Whether Nietzsche himself would have held that the Prussian idea of culture and civilization, and the Prussian means of making them prevail, were right or wrong, may be a question. But there is no question that it is largely owing to him that these Prussian ideas and means have found suitable soil to prosper in, and have produced the monstrous abortion now facing us. I have tried to suggest to you what Prussianism means, and what our fight with it means. As I said at the outset,

this war is a war of Ideals, a war over irreconcilable principles as to what human civilization means. The truth is, we are at fight not against Flesh and Blood, but against spiritual Principalities and Powers. We are at fight not to acquire territory and power, not even merely to defend our own territory and power, and the territory and power of our allies. We are at fight to prevent the lowest and most inhuman conception of civilization gaining dominance to corrupt mankind. With whatever limitations present or to come of human weakness, we are at fight to assert our belief in Righteousness and Human Brotherhood, and our consequent belief that the idea of the supremacy of material Might, with its inevitable insidious accompaniment of fraud and cruelty, as a basis of civilization is an idea foul and damnable, an idea that must be utterly discredited and swept once and for all out of the consideration of even the most ill-informed, ill-regulated mind. That ultimately is what we have gone into this war for. And it is that above all else which those who come after us will recognize as in this war its vital characteristic: not its giganticalness, not its unexampled horrors—not these—but the genuine enthusiasm for, and clear vision of the supreme importance to the world of, Righteousness, with which on our side it was calmly, unhesitatingly undertaken, and seen through to victory.

Undertaken thus. Yes, I do think it. Undertaken thus.

At so solemn an hour as the present, on so grave a subject as the one before us, I am anxious to avoid extravagance and the slightest suspicion of fantasticalness. We human beings—not only the general ruck of us, but even the most enlightened, philosophical, and angelic—are a complex admixture. When therefore I say that our moving energy in this war, that what will finally emerge as the predominant characteristic and significance of this war, is our enthusiasm for Righteousness, our clear vision that it is in Righteousness alone

that a true basis for civilization is to be found, do not mistake me. Do not, please, think that I pretend that such an exalted enthusiasm and vision are quite *formally* present to the consciousness of every fighting man and active recruit ; or that they are *unceasingly* present to the consciousness of even the most thoughtful of us who are compelled to remain at home and lend aid to our sacred cause in other ways than by personal fighting service. When Michael, indeed, contended with the Devil, he brought no railing accusation against him, we are told, but said simply, 'The Lord rebuke thee.' Well, the spirit of that serene, unruffled championship of Right against Might, of Truth against Falsehood, of Nobility against Selfishness, of Light against Darkness, is for archangels ; it is not, alas ! for us poor men. We do wisely, indeed, to purge and steady ourselves by again and again recalling it to our contemplation, striving to readjust our temper by its exalted temper ; but it is impossible that in our imperfect state it should at every hour be our one sole immediately effective impulse. I am not, therefore, for putting matters to you on an extravagant footing, as if we and our allies were all ministers of light, any more than as if on the other hand our enemies were all fiends of darkness. I am not proposing to you that every man who joins the colours, still less that every man who finds himself at the front under a tornado of shell and shot, is continually conscious of nothing but the sustaining, inspiring thought that he is fighting for Right against Might, for Truth against Falsehood : no, nor that we who are enforced to stay at home reading of atrocities, or bearing up against the sacrifice of lives very dear to us, feel within ourselves no bitterness, no sheer spirit of revenge. At any rate, speaking for myself, I know that if I try to behave better than I feel, it is constantly a struggle, and a struggle by no means always successful. Isn't it so with most of us ? Nor am I with smug pharisaism for being down upon the rude gibe, the scathing sarcasm, the bitter curse, the

vitriolic threat of retribution, which once and again rise in us and are out of our lips unrestrainedly at this or that tale of treachery, insolence, callous or wanton brutality. The *saeva indignatio* of Tacitus is on occasion a righteous indignation, and we need have no qualms of conscience if sometimes the expression of it is not too over-nice in its terms of wrath or contempt. As I have reminded you, it is true that in his contention with the Devil the archangel Michael durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but was content with 'The Lord rebuke thee'. Yes—and no doubt that scripture is written for our admonition. But yet another scripture saith, 'Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof'.

About ourselves, then, we are under no misapprehension. We are perfectly aware that our immediate motives and actions in this war are often mixed, and that sometimes, maybe, they will by no means stand the scrutiny of a disinterested, uncompromising morality. The Kaiser and his Potsdam crew are not on occasion nothing to us but spiritual evils that for God's glory have to be exorcised. They are the physical bullies of Europe who have physically to be thrashed and crushed. Their threat to invade and annihilate England is not the sign of a spiritual danger to mankind's higher conceptions of civilization, but a threat of immediate danger to our own personal physical welfare, which rouses in us the energy of patriotism in its most narrowed sense—a danger which must be met by shot and bayonet, since, rightly, we have no mind to go under in the world. Their brutal savagery in, and insolent annexation of, Belgium are not mere unfortunate throwbacks in the orderly evolution of the world's affairs, which a wide view of the ultimate triumph of God's Kingdom may be content to note and regret. They are immediate calls upon us, as our blood boils in face of them, for swift vengeance and restitution, for straining our sinews unsparingly to bring in that hour when their perpetrators

shall lie abjectly at our mercy and await their humiliating sentence. It is so.

But let me say it. I think it will go home to you as true. Deeper, far deeper down than all this I venture to assert there is in us a conviction—not always articulately expressible, not always at every moment consciously on the surface—but *there, really* there in us, permanently in the heart of our hearts—a conviction that we are at war to-day not only to do our duty by our country and by the friends we are pledged to, but our duty by the Eternal Righteousness itself. Is it not that call we have heard and are answering? To cast down and out of existence once and for ever the most inhuman, pitiable spirit that has ever so speciously enslaved man's intelligence, and threatened at the source his finer advancement throughout the nations of the world?

Well, but you'll say, what has all this I have been talking about to do with Art¹? Or rather, with Art at all what time and mood have we for any concern to-day?

Frankly, for my part, little or none, if Art is merely an amusement, a dilettante curiosity, the just pretty or exciting toy for hours of idleness, a means of livelihood for certain professional men. But I take it for granted that you and I know that it is not that, nor approaching that—or you at least I hope would not be here. It is one of the vital, permanent, universal interests of the human race. I need not now argue and illustrate this. With all you I am speaking to it is an accepted and unquestioned fact.

So much so indeed that one of the horrors, the universally bewailed disasters, to us of war is precisely that with this vital human interest it seems to play such havoc. Certainly it does play havoc. During the past terrible months no atrocities have shocked and stunned the world more than the ruin wrought, for instance, at

¹ *Art, Morals, and the War.* I have not quite forgotten that such was the title of this lecture.

Louvain, at Malines, at Rheims: while at various places threatened by the German invaders it was notable how, spite of all the immediate anxiety and terror at their doors, one of the inhabitants' first cares was to remove their artistic treasures, as far as possible, into safety. At critical moments people do not take that care over things really indifferent to them.

Yes, beyond a doubt already has this war played sad havoc with priceless treasures of art, destroyed them out of existence; and there is no restoring them. In another sense, too, and nearer home, for many a day to come, I fear, will it play sad havoc. The lives of many amongst us whose business it is in some form or another to produce art will assuredly in days immediately ahead be straitened enough, and too often something much more than straitened. All this has to be faced; and it is a grim thing we face.

Yet without any levity of criticism unpardonable at such a time as this, we have to remind ourselves with what stoicism we can muster that the effect of war upon art has never been wholly bad, nay, has on occasion been quite the reverse of bad. Some of the finest art the world has ever seen has been wrought amid days and surroundings very far from peaceful. You will remember how much of the great art of Greece was thus wrought, and of Italy, and of the Gothic builders. Or again, to turn to a single artist's experience, some of that incomparable statuary in the sacristy of S. Lorenzo, was it not worked at by Michael Angelo while he was actually engaged himself as active commander in defending Florence from the invasion of the infamous Alessandro? There is some force in the paradox that War and Art are not always enemies, and that Peace is not always Art's best friend.

For Art has her dangers—dangers coming to her from men's frivolity, their absorption in sumptuousness and luxury, their over-attention to trivialities and mere curiosities, their morbid excitement after titillating

novelties, their resultant shallowness of judgement and sane appreciation. Dangers from these things and the like of them assail Art and are fatal to her fineness. Dangers such as these history and experience only too surely tell us are not seldom the fruits of some long spell of easy Peace.

You will not think I am wicked enough to invoke war that Art may flourish. I only wish to remind you and myself that we need not despair of Art, not even of its interests temporarily, because war is upon us. The truth is that for many a day past to some of us it has by no means seemed that the ways of Art, however pleasant, have been altogether salubrious. There has been overmuch excitement and frivolity, overmuch running hither and thither after fools and their folly, overmuch licence and even applause accorded to fallacious theories and practices as destructive as they were ridiculous. To remind ourselves of but one example. How persistently has it been dinned into our ears in certain anti-philistine quarters—sometimes, one must confess, with brilliant and seductive paradox—that Art need have no thought of Morals and Spiritual Purpose, nay indeed, ceases to be Art so far as it *has* thought of them—must concern itself not at all with the vulgar work-a-day likes and dislikes of the general community, but keep retired, dainty, disinterested, apart, from the soiling dust of life's normal courses—a sheltered sensitive-plant fearful of the passing touch! Ah! there is little doubt we needed a cleansing purge, a sharp awakening, a recalling to sanity, to a readjustment of our estimates of things. Well, perhaps it was only war, a war such as that upon us, a war, as I have put it to you, for the sake of fundamental ideals, that could give us for Art and conduct generally the salutary shock.

At any rate, speaking for myself, so far as Art is concerned, and so far as many other vital interests besides Art are concerned, I look forward to the end and results

of this war with no doubt and no anxiety. It is a bitter discipline we are going through, and it probably will be a long discipline. The personal as well as the national sufferings we may have to endure alarm and sicken us. But, as I suggested to begin with, the day will come when men, looking back upon that fateful fifth of August, will not say—Ah! then the Worst came upon us—but Ah! then the Best! For they will see what it has done for them and for the world to have been recalled to a clearer sense of the things that really matter in life, and to have had grace with whatever shortcomings to make for these, to stand by them. They will have seen—and will have taken to heart the lesson of that sight—what disaster surely enough waits upon overweening pride greedy of and trustful in material power, and upon a culture which dares openly to flout the sanctions of morality. *Vexilla regis prodeunt*—the Royal Banners forward go. Those sonorous, inspiring, ancient words are familiar to us. To-day they ring in our ears. *Vexilla regis prodeunt*—the banners of an Over-Lord, yes, but of an Over-Lord indeed: the Over-Lord of Righteousness—against whom all men and nations, putting their trust in force and fraud, be they never so ingeniously and staggeringly equipped, at last dash themselves to pieces.



THIS BOOK IS DUE ON THE LAST DATE
STAMPED BELOW

NOV 15 1915

NOV 15 1915

NOV 24 1965 9 9

REC'D

NOV 10 '65 - 5 PM

LOAN DEPT.

MAY 27 1985

RECEIVED BY

MAY 16 1985

CIRCULATION DEPT.

30m-1, '15

300063

D525

Image 15

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY

GENERAL LIBRARY - U.C. BERKELEY



8000811367

